



NEWS RELEASE

OCTOBER 17, 2002



Contact Don Ledford, Public Affairs • (816) 426-4220 • 400 East Ninth Street, Room 5510 • Kansas City, MO 64106

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow

NEW LAW ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE LAUNCHED IN NORTHWEST MISSOURI

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, and Mark S. James, Special Agent in Charge of the Kansas City Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, announce the creation of a new law enforcement task force. At a joint news conference this morning, representatives of law enforcement agencies in northwest Missouri unveiled NITRO – the Northwest Missouri Interagency Team Response Operation.

NITRO, which includes a 16-county area of northwest Missouri, will be staffed initially by full-time law enforcement officers from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Maryville Public Safety Department and the Cameron Police Department. Additional law enforcement agencies will participate on a case-by-case basis in their jurisdictions. NITRO will also work closely with existing law enforcement task forces in Buchanan County, northeast Missouri and elsewhere.

“One of my top priorities as United States Attorney has been to forge relationships with local law enforcement agencies in the smaller communities and rural areas of the Western District of Missouri,” Graves said. “We are all acutely aware of the limitations of both manpower and finances to combat crime in this part of the state. But by working together, federal, state and local agencies will generate the critical mass needed to aggressively investigate and prosecute narcotics trafficking, illegal gun activity and violent crime in northwest Missouri.”

The Kansas City Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms will provide some of the manpower for NITRO, as well as vehicles and other equipment (including computers), and provide training to participating law enforcement officers.



NITRO

Page 2 of 4

“NITRO will be a vital crime fighting tool to reduce crime in the northwest counties of Missouri,” James said.

Assistant Special Agent in Charge Paul Vido of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms represented the Kansas City Field Division at this morning’s news conference. Also participating in this morning’s press conference were Col. Roger Stottlemire, Superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol; Keith Wood, Director of the Maryville Public Safety Department; and Capt. Galen White, representing Chief Hal Riddle of the Cameron Police Department.

“NITRO delivers the resources of the federal government to grass roots law enforcement efforts,” Graves said. “NITRO is the strategic partnership that will make a critical difference. By joining forces, we will accomplish more than our individual agencies could achieve alone.”

In addition to the investigative officers assigned to NITRO, the U.S. Attorney’s Office will provide a full-time federal prosecutor who will focus on NITRO cases. “I am committed to putting the resources together to make this new coalition an effective tool for law enforcement in northwest Missouri,” Graves said.

NOTE: DIGITAL PHOTOS OF THIS MORNING’S PRESS CONFERENCE ARE AVAILABLE VIA E-MAIL.

Photos include:

- * U.S. Attorney Todd Graves
- * Paul Vido of the ATF
- * Roger Stottlemire of the Missouri Highway Patrol
- * Keith Wood, director of the Maryville Public Safety Department
- * Representative officer of the Cameron Police Department

To receive photos, please e-mail requests to Don Ledford at don.ledford@usdoj.gov



STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

With the formation of NITRO, I believe we have an effective program to partner with federal, state and rural law enforcement agencies to combat criminal activities in northwest Missouri. Participating in the NITRO program will relieve a large problem of budgetary and manpower restraints for our department.

*Gary Howard, Sheriff
Andrew County, Missouri*

We at the Caldwell County Sheriff's Office are very excited about NITRO. As Sheriff, I am looking forward to great accomplishments while working together. This is not only going to benefit us a smaller agency, but the byproduct of more law enforcement in our community will enhance a safer and more productive environment for our citizens.

*Kirby Brelsford, Sheriff
Caldwell County, Missouri*

The Chillicothe Police Department is in strong support of the NITRO concept. Operating as an interagency tactical organization is a necessity for departments in our area. Working together to solve a problem has always been the best idea.

*Richard L. Knouse, Chief of Police
Chillicothe, Missouri*

As Gentry County Prosecutor, I am extremely pleased that the Northwest Missouri Interagency Team Response Operation has been formed. This organization offers Gentry County and rural northwest Missouri something that it has not had access to before in dealing with the drug problem. Gentry County supports NITRO and looks forward to using its resources in the months ahead. This is a valuable and welcome addition to law enforcement.

*Edward M. Manning, Prosecuting Attorney
Gentry County, Missouri*

The Grundy county Sheriff's Office is excited about being a part of NITRO and looking forward to being an active member of this task force. The partnership created by NITRO will be unique to our area and should become a major deterrent to crime in northwest Missouri.

*Greg A. Coon, Sheriff
Grundy County, Missouri*

STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

The Nodaway County Sheriff's Department is looking forward to working with the new NITRO organization. Hopefully this will help with the drug problem in Nodaway County.

*Ben F. Espey, Sheriff
Nodaway County, Missouri*

Northwest Missouri State University Department of Campus Safety fully supports the mission of NITRO to rid our community of drugs and dangerous weapons. Through collaboration of Northwest Missouri law enforcement agencies and the United States Attorney's Office, we will have a systematic plan for dealing with drug problems in our community. It is a pleasure to be a part of a team with a unified vision.

*Clarence Green, Director of Campus Safety at NMSU
Maryville, Missouri*

I am pleased to be a part of the initial stages of the NITRO endeavor. During my tenure as Nodaway County Prosecuting Attorney, my office has been actively involved in the vigorous prosecution of those associated with drug activity. The implementation of the NITRO effort will serve to provide assistance and partnering between various law enforcement agencies as we work together to address the criminal activity associated with the distribution of drugs throughout Northwest Missouri. My office will be actively involved in the NITRO effort and provide it full support.

*David A. Baird, Prosecuting Attorney
Nodaway County, Missouri*

The Trenton Police Department supports and looks forward to participation with NITRO (Northwest Missouri Interagency Team Response Operation). Small departments in rural Missouri do not have the necessary staffing and technology needed to effectively keep pace with the mobile criminal. A joint operation such as NITRO is an effective and efficient partnership to fight crime in northwest Missouri.

*Robert Lewis, Chief of Police
Trenton, Missouri*